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Effective Teaching in Islam, an Analytic Study

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Abstract:

The Islamic concept of teaching and learning is not limited to the memorization of Al-Qur'ān and religious studies by Muslim scholars. Islamic education is often erroneously perceived as education on religious matters, whereas in fact, Islamic education (based on the Qur'ān and Sunnah) provides a rich reservoir of knowledge in the modern society. Islam is the only religion that provides the guidelines in all areas of life. This is the time that Muslim Ummah has gone away from the right path and is in miserable condition, facing gigantic issues. We learn that Islam obtains these objectives through effective teaching methodology. It is the need of the day that guidelines must be extracted from Islamic system of education so that through education, reforms be brought in the society. Actual purpose of acquiring knowledge, in Islam is to propagate the real knowledge so that more and more people would earn benefit from the teachings of the Messenger of Allāh, would act upon them and an Islamic welfare society would be formed. So, Prophet Muhammad SAW repeatedly directed to propagate knowledge and convey it to the others. For this purpose, at the time of Muhammad, not only educating the people was managed, but delegations were sent to the far of places.

Key Words: Teaching Methodology, Islamic Education Sciences, Educational Challenges

Education and Learning in Light of Qur'ān and Sunnah:

The word “knowledge” is employed here in the sense that is beneficial for Islam, Muslims, and the entire humanity, either it would directly be related with Qur'ān and Sunnah, just as Qur'ānic sciences, Hadith sciences, or it would be a tool to get benefit of any kind, just as languages, Medical sciences or Arithmetic sciences. Acquiring knowledge is graded as the best deed in Islam. The verses of first revelation also show the importance of reading and writing. Almighty Allah says:

إِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ۚ اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ ۝ الَّذِي

عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ ۚ عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ ۝¹

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(Read with the name of thy Lord, Who created, Created man from a clot. Read, and thy Lord is the Most Bounteous, Who teaches by the pen: Teaches man that which he knew not.)

Moreover, it is written in Qur'ān:

وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ.²

(And He educates them with knowledge and wisdom.)

Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

لا حسد الا في الثنتين رجل آتاه الله المال فسطه على هلكته في الحق ورجل آتاه

الله الحكمة فهو يقضى بها ويعلمها الناس.³

(Only two persons are to be proud upon; the first one is the person who is bestowed some riches by Allah, so he spends it on good deeds. The second is whom Allah blessed wisdom and he make decisions in accordance with it and educates people with it.)

On another occasion Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

فضل العالم على العابد كفضلي على ادناكم ثم قال رسول الله ﷺ ان الله وملائكته

واهل السموات والارضين حتى النملة في جحرها وحتى الحوت ليصلون على معلم

الناس الخير.⁴

(A scholar has priority upon a worshipper as I have upon a common man among you. He ﷺ added that Allah almighty Himself, holy angels and creatures of skies and earth, even ants in her hole and fish pray for the betterment of the one who teaches people.)

Fixation of Educational Objectives:

It is impossible to attain the results and objectives of education without fixing its objectives as it is useless to run on a track without fixing the destination. Education and teaching is a serious act, and without them the building of individual and collective life is collapsed and the struggle of an individual remains in vain. *Waqār Rīdvī* writes about its importance:

“If there is no fixation of the objectives, an uncertain situation keeps prevailing and after all one has to walk on scattered routes where they carry him. So, time, resources and age are exhausted. So it is necessary to fix the destination first of all.”⁵

Dr. *Aḥmad* writes:

“Students want an objective of their life. If their time, their culture and their leaders are unable to give the any direction, then they fix inferior objectives themselves.”⁶

Islam wants to see education in accordance with spiritual heritage i.e. the religion. Islam opposes to attain purposeless education because

such an education imposes bad effects on the individual as well as on the society. Such education can never be fruitful for the society and individuals are not produced to meet the demands and requirements of society.

As per Islamic point of view the very first objective of education is to cater such individuals who would understand the Islamic ideology and be having blind faith on it and they would frame-up their lives according to this ideology. Islam doesn't take the education a destination but thinks that it is a source to reach the destination.

According to Islam, the second purpose of education is interconnected with the first one, and that is to provide light and guidance to attain the will of Allah. If the education makes him feel that he is an assistant of Allah on the earth and he has to become within the limits issued by Allah, then it is the education that is a source of reaching to Allah. *Ghulam 'Abid* says:

“In Islam the purpose of education is to build up relation between Allah and man. As a result man willingly acts upon Allah's orders in all walks of life and he makes the will of

Allah the standard of his wishes.”⁷

In Islam their objective of education is character building of individuals. Fundamental mission of the Prophet ﷺ was the inner purification i.e. the purification of soul. The purpose of Islamic education is the neatness of thoughts. Its purpose is to teach the moral values and manners of good life. According to Dr. *M.A. Aziz*:

“The purpose of Islamic Educational system is to produce such a man who would be simple, having good insight, well disciplined, courageous and bound of limitations of Allah in his manners and character.”⁸

Islam promotes such education which would cause the development of individuals and the community. The education which would create such an environment in which mutual interaction, love, care and brotherhood between individual and community. As *Salīm Aḥmad* says:

“The very first relation of Islam is with the individual. An individual thinks Islam as the relation between himself and Allah. The same relation satisfies this real relation of Islam. But Islam prevails this relation of individual and Allah upon the entire life and with the relation of Allah an individual enters the world of relations. These relations are changed into family, national and human relations on basis of being the kids of Adam. Islam fixes the rights of all of them and connects them with the same base.”⁹

According to Islam, fourth purpose of the education is to maintain balance and to interconnect between the religion and the world. Islam discourages leaving the world and grades world the reaping of the life after death. In Islam the concept of education is in accordance with the modern demands in the respect that it is in favour of struggling for the success, working hard to meet the financial needs and making continuous struggle to unfold the secrets of the universe. Dr. *Aḥmad* describes in this regard:

“Education should fulfil the economic, social, scientific and technical requirements of society. Not only these requirements would be ignored but education should work for their fulfilment positively. There must be such an acting element that each and every individual would get financial solidarity.”¹⁰

Objectives of Education:

1. Access to Allah:

Basic concept of Islamic system of education is to create the sense of one's Creator and the real Master. As Qur'ān says:

الرَّحْمَنُ فَاسْأَلْ بِهِ خَبِيرًا¹¹

(Ask about the Rahman from someone who knows.)

As access to Allah cannot be attained without knowledge, so it is made obligatory to acquire knowledge for every individual. Thus, he will be able to know about his Creator and His demand. So, for this purpose, the correct understanding of Qur'ān and *Sunnah* must be attained. It is the access which is required and human life and the success of both the worlds entirely depend upon it. The Prophet ﷺ says:

افضل العلم بالله عزوجل ان قليل العمل ينفع مع العلم وان كثير العمل لا

ينفع مع الجهل¹²

(The best knowledge is the access to Allah. A light deed with the knowledge is beneficial but more deeds with ignorance are of no advantage.)

2. Accurate Understanding and Awareness:

The basic objective of education is to find awareness and complete understanding of Qur'ān and *Sunnah* so that orders of Almighty Allah and teachings of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would completely be implemented, because the life of a Muslim revolves around this orbit and the real success lies in it. It is said in Qur'ān:

مَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا¹³

(The only person who will achieve the great success is the one who obeys Allah and His Prophet.)

3. The Cause of High Grades:

When one acquires knowledge, Allah makes his status high by enhancing his grades.

It is said in Holy Qur'ān:

يَرْفَعُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ¹⁴

(Allah will raise their grades who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge.)

Hence proved from this verse that faith and knowledge both enable man to advance towards the destination of success and development.

4. Acquiring Knowledge is Obligatory.

Allah took oath from the scholars of scripture-holders through the Holy Messengers that they would convey all the orders and the will of Allah given in the Book, without any alteration or amendment and they will make no mistake in propagating these pledges. Muslim scholars have also been provoked that they will leave no stone unturned in spreading the religious knowledge and they must conceal nothing. Education is a fundamental necessity of everyone. Allah says:

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَتُبَيِّنُنَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَكْتُمُونَهُ¹⁵

(And when Allah took a covenant from those who were given the scripture, you must make it clear to the people and do not conceal it.)

In the same way, in *Hadith* also it is graded obligatory to acquire knowledge. The Prophet of Allah ﷺ said:

لأن يؤدب الرجل ولده خير له¹⁶

(No father can give his son anything better than good manners.)

For that education is obligatory in Islam and each and every possible source should be utilized to perform the obligation. Its first step should be taken at the home in supervision of parents.

5. The Basic Necessity:

Islam is the only religion who graded education a basic necessity of every human being. It is the only religion who raised voice of 'education for all' without any discrimination of male and female. Acquiring knowledge was made obligatory for every Muslim male and female, poor and rich, black and white. Whereas before it, there was no concept of so compulsory education. Every society and tribe was gratified with the

education of higher community. Education of chief of a tribe, rich people and religious leaders was compulsory. It was not at all necessary for common people. Even in Greece and China also there was no concept of compulsory education. A specified community was thought to be able to acquired knowledge. Plato also gave discrimination to a special community of Philosophy.¹⁷

6. Knowledge, the Standard of Dignity:

Acquiring knowledge is an important element of creation of man. It is the diamond due to which man was graded a high quality creature than even the sacred angels. Allah says:

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ.¹⁸

(And when We said to the angels, "Prostrate before Adam"; so they prostrate, except Iblees. He refused and was arrogant and became of disbelievers.)

Almighty Allah bestowed His vicegerent, the man, success in the battle of life by bestowing upon him the wealth of knowledge. He made 'seeking knowledge' the instinct of man. Progress of the temporal world also lies in the knowledge. A believer in his solitude, and in his public or social life often utters these words in which he seeks a successful worldly life:

رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً.¹⁹

(O our Lord! Give us in this world good.)

And moreover he says:

وَوَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً.²⁰

(And hereafter good.)

7. The Human Welfare:

Allah has made man his assistant on the earth, as He says:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ الْأَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِّيَبْلُوكُمْ فِي مَا

آتَاكُمْ.²¹

(And it is He who has made you successors upon the earth and has raised some of you above others in degrees so that He may try you through what He has given you.)

The height of degrees is bestowed due to the knowledge. Dignity upon other creatures is also due to the knowledge. That's why the responsibilities upon him are also more than all creatures. Allah always behaves well with man, so the men should also behave kindly with their fellow men and enlighten them with knowledge. Allah verifies all

activities of men which are performed for the welfare of human beings under the fundamental rule of obedience to Allah.

8. Good Deeds:

The chain of life and death is to observe the goodness of human deeds, as Allah says:

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا.²²

(He who created death and life to test you as to see which of you is the best in deed.)

The beauty of deed produces from knowledge. It is the knowledge due to which the deeds and his personality is brightened.

9. Inter-connected and Balanced Character:

Qur'ān provides instructions about a balanced and interconnected development of physical, spiritual, social, financial, educational and civilizational aspects of human life. By forbidding from wine, Islam prohibits to spend money blindly and urges to improve one's economy but not by unfair means. As said in Qur'ān:

قُلْ مَنْ حَرَّمَ زِينَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي أَخْرَجَ لِعِبَادِهِ.²³

(Say, "Who has forbidden the adornment of Allah which he has produced for His servants.")

According to above mentioned verse beautifying oneself is lawful. Moreover it is also ordered that:

وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَى.²⁴

(And abide in your houses and do not display yourselves as was done in the earlier time of ignorance.)

So to exhibit decoration and make-up is prohibited. Worship is obligatory but leaving the world is prohibited. Hence, reason and revelation, the soul and body, character and economy is a beautiful and balanced blend that forms up a balanced personality.

10. Knowledge is Compensation for Sins.

Knowledge is truth, awareness of the reality. It is such a great thing that it compensates the past ill deeds. Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

من طلب العلم كان كفارة لما مضى.²⁵

(Whoever seeks knowledge, he is atoning for what he has passed.)

So, whoever seeks the knowledge, he seeks the truth and the reality. Consequently, bad doings committed while ignorance are exempted.

11. A source to Attain the Destination.

In Islam education itself is not the destination rather it is a source of attaining the destination. Its real purpose is to prosper the ideology of life, and that is civilization and culture. So, in Islam a knowledge holder, in fact, serves his ideology of life. As Allah says:

بَلْ هُوَ آيَاتٌ بَيِّنَاتٌ فِي صُدُورِ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ²⁶

(Rather, the Qur'ān is distinct verses within the breasts of those who have been given knowledge.)

So, educational system of Islam is the name of collective attempt which carries the human awareness to the heights.

Effective Teaching:

Allah Almighty says:

أَدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ.²⁷

(Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is the best.)

Holy Qur'ān has described three basic rules for effective teaching; wisdom, instruction and arguing method. Students should be taught in a way that both knowledge and wisdom may get matured in their heart and mind and become a part of their personality. After learning they may feel a positive change in themselves. Knowledge may not be just on their tongues but also be visible from their characters. And they may feel a special kind of satisfaction while learning and after getting learned. Students will be satisfied only when their teacher would step down to their mental level and will teach them keeping in view their interests and individual differences. To make the lesson interesting and to clear the concepts *Ibn-e-Khaldūn* has described the following natural method of teaching:

“First of all whichever the art is to be taught, its main points should be explained and should be beautifully taught and during this, the mental capacity of student should positively be kept in mind. Moreover it should be observed that to which extent the surrounding things may be presented as examples and precedents.”²⁸

So, the first standard of good teaching is being in accordance with the mental capability of students, and secondly, available objects, examples and incidents must be utilized occasionally. Dr. *M.A. Aziz* describes:

“Muslims got the importance of media in teaching methodology and utilized it properly. The student should be

taught according to his capacity so that he wouldn't feel difficult while choosing the profession ahead. And he should get specialty in the subject of his choice so that he would succeed well.”²⁹

Munawar Jahan points out an important instruction of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as follows:

“The Prophet ﷺ gave instruction to the preachers and teachers that they should teach them according to their temperament and their mental level. And they should talk to them in accordance with their understanding and wisdom level.”³⁰

Teaching method of wisdom will be successful only when it is according to the mental level and demand of the students. Consequently, students will be satisfied with the thing made clear to them. If teaching fails to satisfy the students, absence of satisfaction will be very obvious on their faces. So, it is the responsibility of teacher that he should make clear about the elective subjects of all the nations. Moreover, student should know about the resources and power of the nations, their manners, interests, religions, about their governance and war methodologies.

The second teaching method is advice method. It may be the best source of character building of students. The duty of a teacher is not only to transfer the bulk of words to the students, but to keep him away from bad doings, and to urge him for good deeds. To attain this objective, teacher will have to adopt the advice method, and he will have to demonstrate his own character as an ideal. In such a situation even a single word uttered by him will influence the students. Thus the teacher will be succeeded both in his teaching and training the pupils. It is very important that a teacher must show his exemplary character to get required results. The style of advisor is the thing that makes advice effective. If a teacher chooses inspiring words, he will definitely achieve the required consequences in less time, as compare to the teacher who is strict and rigid. So, teacher should produce softness in his words as well as in his voice while passing pieces of advice to the students. In this way it will be a very effective method and besides this it will add the sense of respect in students. *Imam Ghazālī* graded affection on students the first requirement for effective teaching. According to Dr. *M.A. Aziz*:

“Affection is an apostle heritage. If teacher is capable to ignite want for learning in a student, he found his destination.”³¹

Third teaching method is discussion method. Teacher should involve the students in learning process by discussion method. Each student should be given chance to put his ideas forward and he should be encouraged throughout the process. In religious schools of Islam, this method has been utilized for centuries. Mutual questioning and answering creates such an environment in classroom that students feel happy in participating the discussion and expressing their ideas. So, in this way an interest is created in the lesson and students are able to learn more as well as mature their learning. In Islamic religious schools, all methods like book reading method, lecture method, dictation method, question-answer method and discussion method, have been utilized and all of these methods had been fulfilling educational requirements and demands of the time.

Today also, if we adopt the apostolic methods of education in our educational institutions, may definitely be fruitful. *Na’īm Ṣiddiqī* describes in his books:

“In Qur’ān, the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ has been mentioned a teacher of the Book and wisdom more than once. In *Nabwi Mosque*, he at a time supervised the *Dhikr* sitting and on other side commanded the teaching, learning sitting. But he preferred and felt comfort to see teaching learning assembly and participated it.”³²

Words uttered by Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ were inserted in the heart and mind of the listener very clearly. The basis of his teaching was love, care and well-wishing. There was no hardness in his attitude. He never earned from teaching. He used to talk to the people according to their capability. He always mentioned grading rule while teaching and passed the instructions with proper gaps and intervals. And often he created a pleasant and interesting environment for students by utilizing different resources for maintaining listener’s concentration. He repeated things again and again so that things might be very clear for all of the audience. While talking, he raised question and answered the questions raised by the listeners very patiently. These teaching methods are a kind of light in today’s world. We should recognize the place of Muḥammad ﷺ as a teacher and should follow his effective teaching strategies. The real welfare and development of teachers and students lies in it.

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